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Building Maine Communities Through the Arts and Culture: The Baldacci Plan

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“Building Maine Communities Through the Arts and Culture”

The Baldacci Plan

Summary

The Vision: I am running for Governor because I want my son Jack and your sons and daughters to find opportunities here in Maine. I want to make Maine a leader in providing opportunity for ALL Mainers – north, south, east, and west. That means good jobs with benefits, an educated workforce, a clean environment, health care for all Mainers, and a stable climate for businesses, both large and small. To do this, we need bold and creative action.

Achieving the Vision: Maine’s future prosperity depends upon a highly educated and creative workforce, and an innovative economy – one that prizes fine papermakers and shipbuilders, farmers and fishers, artists and designers, actors and musicians, and the cultural events and institutions that make for vibrant Maine communities. As the Bangor Daily News recently put it, “Maine’s sparse population in much of the state means that it must work to attract creative types – artists and authors, scientists and software designers – in addition to growing some locally, if (Maine) is to survive in the changing economy.”

Today, after a full generation of organized effort by many individuals and groups, we can say with pride that, in the arts and culture, Maine has it all! A vigorous cultural life exists in all parts of Maine, in every community. In 2000, the creative sector of our economy employed fully 14,000 people. Maine has not, however, taken full advantage for our people of the creative economy, as have other states in New England. What we possess as a state in the arts and cultural resources is truly remarkable; and the prospect of connecting these resources with a new, creative economic model presents a great opportunity for Maine and for all Maine communities. The following five steps will make this connection; strengthen our families, our communities, and our cultural institutions; and create the beginnings of a public/private, state cultural policy for Maine:

1. Promote the Role of the Arts in Maine Public Education

Arts education teaches life-skills and disciplines that support full and rewarding lives. These same skills and disciplines are needed for the 21st century workforce as a whole, not just for those who will work in the arts and culture. Maine’s arts education programs must remain strong and on a par with other, basic disciplines if Maine is to develop the creative problem solvers we need for the new, knowledge-based economy.

2. Support the New Century Community Program (NCCP)

The Maine Cultural Affairs Council, a unique collaborative of state government and private organizations, has delivered \$4.2 million in state matching grants to Maine communities, to preserve Maine’s local, cultural resources and strengthen their effectiveness. In the process, the NCCP has generated \$13.5 million in matching funds and in-kind assistance, and has gained recognition as a national model of public/private cultural collaboration and policymaking. State support of the NCCP must continue, to

prevent erosion of our state's precious cultural resources, and as a foundation for building the creative economy.

3. Revitalize Maine's Downtowns and Villages

Today, Maine's cities, towns, and villages abound with examples of how the arts and culture can revitalize our community centers, with significant benefits for the local and state economies. Maine has an unsurpassed stock of historic and architecturally significant buildings, urban spaces, and town and village centers with Maine's distinctive sense of place. Creative use of these buildings and spaces is one way to strengthen the identity of our communities, stimulate community development, bring business to our downtowns, combat sprawl, and improve our local economies. Programs in various states of progress are underway all across Maine – in places like Portland, Norway, Lewiston/Auburn, Augusta, Dover-Foxcroft, Bangor, Rockland, Stonington, Eastport, and the entire St. John Valley – and must be financially supported on a continuing basis by state government.

4. Sustainable Development

Healthy cultural resources are part of the solution for Maine on a continuing basis, rather than simply another sector to be supported by taxes. Cultural tourism, closely allied to nature tourism, is a major way to increase this sector's well-being and Maine's own. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the value of cultural tourism to Maine exceeds \$1.3 billion annually, and involves more than 14,000 jobs. A state-led task force on sustainable tourism will help explain and enlarge the role cultural tourism plays in the Maine economy; and make recommendations to assure we don't kill these resources by "loving them too much." It will also identify opportunities for cultural agreements with other countries, to promote the state's products and artists abroad, and bring new, international business opportunities home to Maine.

5. Research

The creative economy is today in its infancy in Maine, and it will take new knowledge to realize its full potential and sustain our precious resources. More research on Maine arts, culture, and their associated institutions is needed; and we will encourage this through partnerships among the Maine Cultural Affairs Council, our private colleges and public universities, the Maine Development Foundation, and others. In addition to baseline information, we will develop case studies of successful resource protection and community revitalization strategies in our cities, towns, and villages; and use these to help other communities learn and attract the private and public resources needed to build and sustain their own creative economies.

For more information on the positions of John Baldacci on other priorities for the State go to www.baldacciforgovernor.com or call his campaign office at 774-2626.